

Student Educator Course Transcript Collection Frequently Asked Questions

General Questions

1. When are the data due? August 15, 2012

2. Will the VT DOE be providing funds to districts to cover the expenses associated with this data collection? No, this data collection is required by US DOE under the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act. Districts have previously received this funding.

<http://bit.ly/HSAJw9>

3. If the collection is for ARRA money, why will it continue after this year? ARRA was an investment in building a foundation for data systems. New federal requirements will assume we have these data available.

4. How will these data be used? The VT DOE is required to collect these data. However, the types of analyses and reports created from these data have yet to be determined but we have identified many benefits of having access to the information linking teachers and students.

5. How will these data be collected? The data will be collected via an online application created by VT DOE. Each school will prepare two files - a course and a transcript file. These files will be uploaded into the VT DOE system.

6. What district staff need to be involved in this data collection? When VT DOE piloted this data collection we found that Superintendents, district-level data managers, curriculum coordinators, principals, school level guidance staff, and school registrars were all helpful in completing the data collection.

7. About how long will it take to complete the data collection? VT DOE piloted this data collection in FY11. For the pilot schools the data collection required about 83-110 staff hours to complete.

8. Why are these data being collected? These data are being collected to meet the requirements under federal law that the State of Vermont agreed to follow in order to receive the Statewide Fiscal Stabilization Funds.

9. Can we use an existing Student Information System for this data collection? Yes, you will need to add fields to accommodate the new course codes and the linkage between teacher, courses, students, and their grades.

10. What do I need to know about student confidentiality and FERPA compliance? The SECT data are confidential. Under FERPA schools are allowed to disclose student information to the state agency and the state agency is responsible for complying with FERPA in making redisclosures. The VT DOE has policies to protect privacy.

11. Why do we have to report course information? Course information is used to 1) make the link between teachers and students and 2) build a student transcript repository as federally required.

12. Why are we reporting educators in SECT and the Educator Census? VT DOE recognizes overlaps between the Educator Census and SECT. At the completion of the FY12 SECT collection we will be conducting a gap analysis to determine if the collections can be combined.

13. Can we have an extension on the due date for SECT data collection? No, the due date is Aug 15 at which point data validation begins. Statewide data validation works best when all schools submit the data. We do track data submissions and the VT DOE can withhold funds when required data is not submitted on time.

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14. Will marks be associated with local assessments or state assessments? Associating marks with state assessments is one potential use of the data. However, the priority level of this analysis has not been discussed.
15. Why do we still have to enter Advanced Courses in the censuses if that data is included in the SECT Collection? The census Advanced Courses is expected to be removed from the census within the next few years.
17. How will data be shared with the USDOE? At this time we just need to assure the USDOE that we have a system in place to collect the data and there are no specific federal requirements.
18. How much support does this data collection need from information technology? Technical support is important for this data collection. Importantly, this collection is by file transfer only - there will be no data entry. The burden on local IT staff depends on many factors including student information systems and vendor support.
19. Is there a direct link between SECT data and funding (as true for the census)? The SECT data does not input to the state funding formula. However, the VT DOE can impose fiscal sanctions against districts not submitting data.
20. What happens if we don't do SECT? The VT DOE can withhold funds from your district. Whether or not VT DOE will withhold funds is to be determined.

Getting Started

1. What is the first thing I should do to prepare for the data collection? Access the NCES course code lists online and begin to map your courses to nationally standardized course codes.
<http://bit.ly/HSAJw9>
2. How will we know which educators need courses mapped for a school? The online application will contain electronic extracts of educators. Submit courses only for educators teaching courses in your school course file. You may not submit an educator not on the list. If you need to add an educator contact the helpdesk.
3. How will we know which students to map courses to? The online application will contain a electronic extract of the students who must have reported courses.
4. My superintendent named me the SECT coordinator. Now what? Review the SECT information available on the VT DOE website, identify your SECT team members, get the team started mapping course codes, and call the helpdesk with questions.
5. Is there an example of how the csv files will look with data in them? The template for building the upload files will be available on the VT DOE website under "related information".
<http://bit.ly/HSAJw9>
6. Are we expected to link every teacher, class or subject, grade, and student for our whole district? Schools are expected to provide educator and student information on all courses taught at your school and courses taught elsewhere for students enrolled at your school (e.g., Technical Centers).
7. Do course names have to change to match the coded courses in the manual? No, however districts/schools may want to include the name associated with a given code from NCES as additional information in their local data systems

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8. What is the process to access new teacher IDs or for those we don't see IDs for? VTDOE will have a form to allow you to submit Educator ID requests. Please contact the help desk
9. When an elementary school does not have grades on the computer, has the state created a program to use? There is no program to allow for data entry for school who do not keep an electronic record including grades. The VT DOE has created an excel file with a data template and the grades can be typed into that file to prepare for data submission.
10. Where will we get the codes are the books coming to us? Lists of codes are available on our website The secondary and prior-to-secondary books are available on the NCES website
11. I am looking to import Educator Permnumbers into our SIS. Is there a way to export this data from the Educator Census? We recommend that the list of educators be exported from SECT because that list is the most accurate list of educators available.
12. Will we be required to change all of our course numbers? Our course numbers are tied to reports and transcripts. You are not required to change your local course numbers, we would recommend that you include local codes and the NCES course codes into your data systems to meet all your reporting needs.

Data Reporting

1. How can I report marks for a course when our school does standards based grading? If you have an overall standards based grade then we have letter mark codes to accommodate this. Otherwise, the course can be graded on a pass/fail based on whether the student is promoted.
2. Do we need to report courses taught in technical centers? Yes, all courses taken by students enrolled in your school should be included in your course data.
3. Do I report courses for students enrolled only a portion of the school year? Yes, and the course outcome information like letter mark and course status will reflect that the student did not complete the course.
4. Do I report courses for home study students at my school? Report academic courses for home study students in your school. Do not report courses for home study students only participating in extra-curricular activities at your school.
5. We have a student who attends an education program outside the school (i.e., legislative page) do we report courses for this student? Yes, report courses for all students enrolled in your school even if they are off-campus for part or all of the school year.
6. What about school choice students in our school, do we report courses for these students? Yes, report courses for all students enrolled in your school and on your student census.
7. Our district pays tuition for a resident student attending an independent school, do we report courses for this student? No, this student is enrolled in an independent school and should not be in your student census.
8. We have a student playing sports in our school but they attend an independent school. Do we report courses for this student? No, this student is enrolled in an independent school.

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9. What if I discover a student who is not on our census but should be OR a student who is on our census and shouldn't be? Request that revisions be made to your student census by calling the helpdesk (802) 828-3777 or submit a form to revise your census.
10. What if I have a teacher and a special educator for one course? The person or persons responsible for ensuring that the course curriculum meets the standard is/are the teacher(s) of record. If either staff member does not have a role in designing the course curriculum they are coded as a contributing professional.
11. If a student is taking a virtual course at home is the course setting "Off Campus" or "Virtual Course"? Please report the course setting as Virtual Course.
12. How do I report a course taken by a student at a college? The course will be mapped to the appropriate course code, the course level will be postsecondary, the course setting is off campus, and the educator will be given a generic educator ID for college educators (i.e., post-secondary educators are 9999200).
13. What if my school offers a course that isn't listed in the federal course code catalog? Course category selection is a local decision. First, carefully review the federal course descriptions. If no description matches a course offered in your school you may need to select an "other" course such as course "04349: Humanities - Other".
14. I am unable to find a course code or description that would fit for and elementary Library class? The only course that had Library in it's description is under Course Category, Miscellaneous, Course code 72003, Course Title Study Skills. If this code is not appropriate for your course please select among other codes.
16. How do we report educators in out-of-state schools? Use the out-of-state educator code or 9999200.
17. Are para-educators "other contributing professionals" Para educators do need to be included in this data collection. If they are included they would be considered an "other contributing professional".
18. Are we reporting courses for this year or historical data too? This SECT data collection asks only for courses taken during School Year 2011-2012.
19. Do "withdraw" or "withdraw fail" courses need to be tracked since no credit was earned? Yes, this information will help us calculate class size at your school.
20. Do I include SECT information for students who started the course late? Yes, this information will help us calculate class size at your school.
21. Do Special Educators who do direct service get listed as "other contributing professional"? It depends on whether the special educator is designing the course curriculum. If yes, co-teacher if no, other contributing professional.
22. Does every course that appears on a transcript need to be entered - many are transfer, credit recovery, etc? No only courses taught during the 2011-2012 school year.
23. What if a student switches from a regular class to a gentle-paced class during the year? Indicate withdrawn for first course and provide the final mark for the second course.

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24. What if a student switches teachers during the school year? Withdraw the student from the first teachers course, add the second course and give transcript information for that course.
25. Who should be assigned for internship course? The educator supervising the educational experience.
26. Does the course number for K-8 classes need course code, section, setting, term and level? These five pieces of information are required for each course because it is this information which links educators with students.
27. How do we report a full year course taught in quarters? If a single grade is given at the end of the year the Section Term is Full School Year (FULL). If a quarterly grade is assigned then the course will have four Section Terms for each quarter (QTR1-QTR4).
28. How should exploratory courses that are taught by non-licensed people be reported? Please contact the help desk to provide more specific information about the course.
29. If there are students in 2 grades in 1 classroom with one teacher is it one course or two? This is a single course. If the course code is specific to a grade level then select the course code which is consistent with the state standards for a particular grade level.
30. If we have students that go to a tech school, should we ensure that the course # we use is the same that the tech ctr uses for their particular tech course? How do we ensure this is consistent throughout the state? We are in the process of coordinating a statewide listing of courses taught at all 15 Vocational Centers. Please check back to our website for this information.
31. In the tutoring situation - if the teacher is providing the tutor with the work for the student and grading the work wouldn't the regular teacher be the teacher of record and not the tutor? Yes
32. Is there a code for courses that are 1 quarter of the school year? No specific course code but the course term would indicate Qtr1, Qtr2, Qtr3, Qtr4.
33. Our SIS does not assign a final grade for students who transfer or withdraw. Will we need to add that? Yes, the letter mark is required. Please see the list of acceptable values in the data specifications document.
34. Regarding marks, one school may use 69 as failing and another may use 59 as failing. How will the state differentiate these in the collection? If the schools provide numeric marks then that information is available to the state. If a letter mark of fail is used the state will not know the schools criteria for the failure.
35. Should we report courses for adult learners? This year we are only collecting SECT information for grades K-12, not adults.
36. What about electives or other courses that are not assigned a level? There are elective courses in the course code catalog which are not specifically associated with a grade level. The course level will need to be determined by reviewing the syllabus.
37. What about vocational students taking high school courses at the vocational's high school? For students enrolled in your school you will need to report courses and educators.

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38. What are the different Course Levels? There are seven different course levels. Please see the data specifications for the acceptable values.

39. What do I do about Art, Music, PE, & Library not having letter or number marks? Either a Pass/fail mark or standard based grading can also be given within our coding system.

40. What do you do with courses and grades for students who transfer from one high school to your high school? This year focus only on students taking courses at your school.

41. What is the correct code to use for COURSELEVEL for college prep or career readiness High School courses? Most general high school courses are considered college prep or career readiness) code and should be codes as general or "G".

41. What to do with VAST students who receive high school diplomas and are enrolled on the census for one day to graduate? VAST students are enrolled in an independent school so their courses do not need to be reported.

File Submission

1. How do I upload my data into the system? Access the Online Application instructions and follow the instructions contained in that document.

2. Can the SECT data be submitted before the census data is finished? Yes and no. The application can be access and the course file can be uploaded before the census data is finished. The transcript file can be uploaded but until the student census is submitted expect non-matching student errors.

3. Do we import SECT data for each school or by district only (all schools in SU in one upload / import file)? Data must be uploaded by school, multiple import files per SU.

4. What types of things will cause SECT errors? Most importantly, the school course file cannot include educators not in the educator list or course codes not in the course code list. Transcript errors will occur when a student is not in the spring census or a course not in the school course file.

5. How will I know if my file submission has been accepted? As part off the upload process, the application will run a series of data validation checks to verify that data meets specifications. The user will then either receive a statement of congratulations or a data error report.

6. While uploading my school course file I receive an error that begins with DUPE_CRS_INFO_NOT_ALLOWD. What does this mean and how do I fix it? Multiple records in your file have the same value for course code, course section, course setting, course term, and course level. Identify the records and correct them. Most likely corrections are editing course sections or deleting duplicate records.

7. Can I use a Mac to upload SECT data? DOE does not support a way for MAC users to do the upload directly. One Mac user reported using a Oracle freeware, Virtual Box. It creates a virtual partition allowing you to do the upload, but does not allow viewing reports.

8. What does it mean when I get this message to try to upload my file again in a few minutes? This message indicates that you attempted to load a file while the loader is doing a short preliminary check of a file another user loaded. This process should be complete momentarily and you can then upload your file.

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9. If I am having trouble uploading my SECT data can I Email it to the VT DOE? Educator/course files can be emailed but transcript files with student information are confidential and should not be emailed.

Contact

1. Who do I contact if I have questions? VT DOE Helpdesk (802) 828-3777.
2. Who do I talk to if I have course data for a student not listed in the Spring Census? Talk with your school registrar or the VT DOE Helpdesk. It may be necessary to add a student to your student census.
<http://1.usa.gov/Jd4vQ6>
3. Who do I talk to if an educator who teaches a course in my school is not on the educator list? Talk with the person in your central office who coordinates the Educator Census or the VT DOE Helpdesk.
4. Who do I contact if our school does not have the requested data? VT DOE Helpdesk at (802) 828-3777.
5. How do I create the export from my Student Information System? Contact your IT person in charge of the Student Information System or your Superintendents office.